

Legislative Session 2002

Special Report

From the Desk of Gigi Talcott

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Thanks for not pitching this newsletter into your recycle bin - yet. I think it's really helpful to get as many people as possible engaged in **solving the problems facing our government**.

More than nine out of ten issues in the Legislature pass with support of both political parties. In fact, after many changes, most "bills" pass unanimously. This year the most challenging problem was rewriting the state budget. I wish I could say that the new budget provided **vital services without raising taxes**. Unfortunately, I can't. The budget is one issue we couldn't agree on. In the end, the newly elected Democrat leadership found some temporary budget patches, instead of setting priorities for long-term solutions. After months of work, the final budget was very disappointing.

The Legislature has now "adjourned," so here's my take on as many issues as I can fit on one 11x17 piece of paper. While this newsletter just hits the highlights, I love working the details and it's real easy to get you as much information as you want. I hope you'll **read at least parts of this and then call, write or email me** with any question or request you may have. I'll get right back to you.

Gratefully,



p.s. I love serving you and hope you'll come to a "town hall." They're quite painless and help us solve problems together.



SEX PREDATORS AND THE ENVIRONMENT (SB 6594)

The good news: The next group of sex predators will be taken away from McNeil Island and sent to programs out of Pierce County. The bad news: The same law significantly weakens environmental protections on McNeil Island. Please encourage our county executive to keep **fighting to protect us and our environment**. Thanks, John.

SHOULD HUMAN HEALTH MATTER? (SB 6553)

Have you ever seen, or for that matter, smelled, the toxic algae that often grows on Steilacoom Lake in the summer? Because the state agencies prohibit the surrounding homeowners from treating the weeds and algae, sections of the lake often become not only unpleasant, but sickening. Finally, thanks to Tom Lowry and the **Steilacoom Lake Improvement Club**, our state agencies will now need to be responsive to human health as well as other natural resources. **It's great to win one with you!**

REP. GIGI TALCOTT • 28th DISTRICT

PROTECTING VOTER RIGHTS (HB2332)

A friend asked, “What’s the most important right we have as citizens?” Is it the freedom of speech? religion? right to bear arms? What do you think? Number one for me is the right to vote, since every other right given by government can be taken away by a vote. This session we helped protect our voting rights by starting to **clean up voter registrations**. Finally, we’re starting to identify voters who are registered to vote twice or are convicted felons.

MOVING BEHIND CLOSED DOORS (SHB 1268)

For over a hundred years elected representatives have debated public employee pay raises out in the open where all sides can be heard. Now, these issues (with billions of your tax dollars) will move behind the closed doors of the governor’s office. Neither you, nor I, can go there. I think that’s moving in the wrong direction. I constantly advocate for **greater openness and accountability in government** – not less.

I’d also like to see competition in doing jobs like printing this newsletter. We can’t now. It’s against state law. Unbelievable, yet true. Our cities and counties use competitive bids, and so does the federal government. I think competitive bidding is the best way to **remove layers of middle managers/bureaucrats**. State employees know their jobs. Let’s get them out from under a top-heavy bureaucracy and free them to provide necessary government services. It can be done. It is being done – just not in our state government. Experience in our cities and other states

shows public employees can win competitive bids and can often find ways to provide **better services at lower costs**. Dedicated state employees win. Taxpayers do, too.

HONORING OUR VETERANS (SB 6430)

Do you know a World War II veteran who left high school before graduation in order to defend our country? Perhaps the veteran is your father, grandfather or neighbor. The Legislature wants to **honor veterans**



“Gigi listening to Cornelius Newton, an awesome Lakewood lady of 106 years”

by allowing high school diplomas to be awarded to them, including those who are deceased. Please call me either at home, 564-9779, or at the office so I can help make it happen. Thanks in advance!

NEW OPPORTUNITIES (HB 1646)

For three years I’ve worked to bring a boot camp called Youth ChalleNGe (the weird NG is for National Guard) to our state. 86 percent of the **high school dropouts** who complete the Youth ChalleNGe training in other states, either continue **in school or go to work** full-

time. I’m grateful to General Lowenberg who led the Legislature in providing this opportunity for troubled teens.

MOST LIKELY CRIME VICTIMS (SB 6490)

I hope you haven’t already discovered that the felony crime you’re most likely to be a victim of is auto theft. We made some changes to the law that I support, but the final state budget only spent \$53,000 (of a \$22,000,000,000 budget) to fight this problem. It’s embarrassing. This is one issue where there’s a clear difference between the priorities I see as a Republican and what the Democrats did. **Can’t we afford to lock up car thieves?**

JOB PROVIDERS

Washington’s small business owners provide nearly 60 percent of all wage and salary private sector jobs. I’m putting this in my newsletter because there wasn’t much happening in Olympia this year to help our job providers and I want everyone to know how important they are to our future. Thanks for listening.

MORE TO FOLLOW...

To get all of us out of traffic jams, I’ve worked on both statewide and regional transportation plans. Voters will decide whether or not to go ahead with either, neither or both of the plans. Rep. Mike Carrell and I have similar priorities in solving transportation problems, so I asked him to report more on that issue in his upcoming newsletter to you. He said sure. Please watch for his report and plan to join us at a “town hall”. The time and place are on the front. Thanks!



MONEY MATTERS



Public Safety

The governor's budget cut all state money to cities for law enforcement. I sponsored a budget amendment in the House to restore the funds. Senator Winsley successfully passed an amendment in the Senate. The final state budget restores funds to Steilacoom (\$44,000), Fircrest (\$114,000), University Place (\$700,000) and Lakewood (\$808,000). Thanks, Shirley.

Tobacco Dollars Going Up In Smoke (SB 6828)

Our Attorney General led the nation in gaining a HUGE settlement from the tobacco companies to support increased health care programs and anti-smoking campaigns. Much of that future money is now gone. Budget writers borrowed over \$500 million of future money to pay this year's bills. The money that's being borrowed will be **gone in fifteen MONTHS**, but Washington taxpayers will be **paying it back for the next thirty YEARS**. Please stop and picture who in your family will be paying for it thirty years from now. Thank you. In 114 years, our state has never resorted to long-term borrowing to pay for day-to-day, one time expenses. The state treasurer and attorney general, both Democrats, say **it's irresponsible, if not illegal**. I agree. Do you?

Nursing Homes

Depressing news: After 30 percent cuts in payments to nursing homes last year, 35 percent of adult family homes shut their doors. It's outrageous that this year's budget cut another \$2.8 million from Medicaid payments. The governor also vetoed a section of the budget that gave home care workers a small wage increase (25 cents/hr) to help our neighbors in need live independently in their own homes.

A Budget Full Of Debt (ESSB 6387)

Sad, yet predictable, **Standard & Poor's** just put Washington state on "**credit watch**" because the budget spends cash reserves, sells off future tobacco money and spends over \$1.4 billion more than it expects to collect in taxes. The Democrat **budget writers did little to control waste or set priorities**. I voted "no". I only hope that our state treasurer wasn't right when he said that the state may not even have enough money to pay its bills through the end of the year.

Tuition Increase

Spending for higher education is reduced by \$54 million and tuition increases will be allowed up to a maximum of 16 percent for UW and WSU undergrads. This costs real people real money, even if it doesn't technically count as a tax increase.

Are Higher Taxes The Answer To Education? (HJR 4219)

Later in this election year you may hear that I don't support education. Please judge for yourself. As a lifelong teacher and a leader on the House of Representatives Education Committee, I often work twelve or more hours a day supporting and improving educational **opportunities for every student** in our state.

What I don't support is a change to voter requirements in the state Constitution. The **state has a responsibility to fund public schools**. It needs to honor that. Fifteen years ago school districts relied on local property tax levies for only 10 percent of their funds and the state provided the other 90 percent. Now the state's share is down to 72 percent. Every time we increase local levies, the state's share shrinks. I'm also worried about having children in some schools that are rich and others that are poor. **It hurts kids and it hurts the communities** where people can't afford increased taxes.

State Representative Gigi Talcott

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**Please join Rep.
Mike Carrell and me
at a “town hall” as
we work together
to solve problems**

Saturday, May 18

9:00 to 10:00 am
Lakewood Library
meeting room
6300 Wildaire Road SW

11:00 am to Noon
Tacoma City Fire Station
Meeting room - Station 16
7217 - 6th Avenue
(Parking in rear – in Park &
Ride lot only)

Wednesday, May 23

7:00 to 8:00 pm
University Place Library
meeting room
3605 Bridgeport Way W



Rep. Gigi Talcott
District 28



I'm always happy to help you find a solution to problems you may have with our state government. Here are some of the ways to reach me ... write a letter (PO Box 40600, Olympia, WA 98504-0600) ... call me at home (564-9779) ... call or meet me at the office (589-7296, 10221 Bridgeport Way SW) ... talk with Colleen in Olympia (360-786-7890) ... email me @ talcott_gi@leg.wa.gov ... leave a message on the state's free “hotline” (1-800-562-6000) ... come to the Capitol when the Legislature is meeting ... or just stop me on the street. Until then, I am honored to serve you and hope you won't recycle this until you've read a little inside.

